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ABSTRACT

This report discusses the outcomes of a study that compared family needs and sources of support perceived by 55 Puerto Rican mothers of young children (ages birth to 5 years) with disabilities residing in Puerto Rico and 39 of their Puerto Rican counterparts living in Florida. The relationship among perceived family needs, sources of support, and mother and child characteristics was also explored. The ABILITIES Index, the Family Needs Survey (FNS), and the Family Support Scale (FSS) were used in the interview process to measure respectively mothers' perceptions of: (1) child's extent of delay; (2) family needs; and (3) sources of support. Multiple regression analyses indicated that family needs did not differ in the two samples. Mothers living in Puerto Rico did, however, perceive significantly more sources of support than mothers living in Florida. Results also indicated that overall single mothers reported more needs than married mothers and reported significantly fewer sources of support than married mothers. (CR)

Puerto Rican Families Who Have Children With Disabilities: A Comparison Between Families
Living In Puerto Rico And Families Living In Florida.

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Final Performance Report

The study compared family needs and sources of support perceived by 55 Puerto Rican mothers of young children with disabilities residing in Puerto Rico and 39 of their counterparts living in Florida. The relationship between perceived family needs and sources of support with mother and child characteristics was also explored. The ABILITIES Index, the Family Needs Survey (FNS), and the Family Support Scale (FSS) were used in the interview process to measure respectively mothers' perception of : (a) child's extent of delay, (b) family needs, and (c) sources of support. Multiple regression analyses indicated that family needs did not differ in the PR and FL samples. Mothers from the PR sample did, however, perceive significantly more sources of support than mothers in the FL sample.

Grant Objectives and Activities

Participant Selection

Participants for this study were 94 Puerto Rican mothers of young children, ages birth to 5 years, with disabilities. Fifty-five of the participants were residents of Puerto Rico and 39 resided in Florida. Mothers were identified through their child's participation in early intervention programs (e.g., School Board, Health and Rehabilitative Services, Children's Medical Services, Diagnostic Evaluation Intervention) or through their membership in local churches, ethnic affiliations, or any other parent support organizations. Participation was voluntary, and mothers received a monetary contribution for the time devoted to the interview.

Instrumentation

The assessment instruments used in this study consisted of a demographic form and three scales: (a) the Family Needs Survey (Bailey & Simeonsson, 1988, 1990), (b) the Family Support Scale (Dunst, Trivette, & Jenkins, 1988), and (c) the ABILITIES Index (Simeonsson & Bailey, 1988). English and Spanish versions of the consent forms and the assessment instruments were provided and used in response to the participant's language preference.

Observations and Assessments

Interviews were done by the student investigator, by a research scientist of the Latino Family Research Project, or by a research assistant. These three researchers were bilingual Puerto Rican females currently active as educators and formally trained to conduct culturally responsive interviews and ensure the confidentiality of the investigation. Participants were scheduled for a visit according to their preference regarding date, time, and place to meet. The interviews were recorded on audio tape to ensure accuracy of the scales and to capture the richness of the information obtained. Answers were verified, coded, and analyzed.

Data Analysis and Results

The analysis of the data responds to the study's five research questions. Results that follow are described according to these questions.

1. Do Puerto Rican mothers of young children with disabilities who live in Puerto Rico express family needs similar to those expressed by Puerto Rican mothers of young children with disabilities who reside in Florida? The relationship of these variables was investigated using a multiple regression analysis. Results of the multiple regression analysis indicated that the country of residence does not predict mothers' perception of family needs

2. Are there any differences between the sources of family support reported by Puerto Rican mothers of young children with disabilities of each geographical subgroup? Results of the multiple regression analysis indicated that a predictive relationship exists between the country of residence and mothers' perception of family support. Descriptive information of the sample reveals that mothers in the Puerto Rico cohort perceived a higher level of family support than mothers on the Florida cohort .
3. What family demographic variables significantly predict family needs across geographical subgroups? Results of the multiple regression analysis indicated that the relationship of mother's and child's age, family's level of education and government assistance with perceived family needs is nonsignificant. Nevertheless, the relationship of the child's ABILITIES score and mothers' marital status with the mothers' perceived needs was found significant. Information from the regression model also indicated that overall single mothers reported more needs than married mothers. The regression model presented a positive correlation between the children's ABILITIES scores and the level of family needs expressed by the mothers.
4. What family demographic variables significantly predict family resources across geographical subgroups? Results of the multiple regression analysis indicated that the relationships between mother's age, child's age and ABILITIES score, family's level of education and government assistance with perceived family support were not significant. Nevertheless, the relationship of mothers' marital status with mothers' perceived support was found significant. Further analysis of the regression model indicated that overall single mothers reported significantly fewer sources of support than married mothers.

5. What relationship, if any, exists between family needs and family resources within each geographical subgroup? The relationship of these variables was investigated using a Pearson Product Moment correlation. The investigation indicated that a predictive relationship exists between perceived family needs and perceived family sources of support when considering the total sample. Nevertheless, evidence suggested that when the sample is examined by country of residence, the predictive relationship between perceived family needs and perceived family sources of support does not hold true for the Florida cohort.

Dissemination

The following presentations and manuscripts were conducted or prepared as a direct result of the grant funding.

Presentations

Daunic, A. & Reyes-Blanes, M.E. (November, 1997). *"Good Teaching" for Culturally Diverse Classrooms: What experts say*. Presented at the Teacher Education Division Conference of the Council of Exceptional Children, Savannah, GA.

Reyes-Blanes, M.E. & Daunic, A. (October, 1997). *Cultural Dynamism: An alternative view of cultural diversity*. Presented at the Florida Federation of the Council for Exceptional Children, Orlando, FL.

Reyes-Blanes, M.E. (July, 1996.) *Puerto Rican mothers of young children with disabilities: A comparison between families living in Puerto Rico and families living in Florida*. Poster Presentation presented at OSEP Research Project Directors Conference, Washington D.C.

Reyes-Blanes., M.E., Vázquez-Montilla, E. (May 1996). *Hispanic families of children with disabilities: Enhancing communication in pre-service education programs*. Presented at Sunshine State TESOL Conference, Tampa, FL.

Manuscripts

Reyes-Blanes, M. E., & Daunic, A. P. (1996). Culturally responsive pedagogy: An imperative approach to instruction. The Journal of Educational Issues of Language Minority Students, 17 (Special issue), 103-119.

Reyes-Blanes, M.E., Correa, V.I., & Bailey, D. (1999). Needs and Support of Puerto Rican Mothers of Young Children with Disabilities Living in Puerto Rico and in Florida. Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 19(1), 54-63.

Jordan, L, Reyes-Blanes, M.E., Peel, B. B., Peel, H.A., & Lane, H.B. (1997). Developing Teacher-Parent Partnerships Across Culture: Effective Parent Conferences. Intervention, 33(3) 141-147.

Daunic, A. P. & Blanes, M. Evaluating beginning teachers in culturally responsive pedagogy: What should we assess? Submitted for publication.